

The Pooch Review

from Pant The Town Dog Walkers



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✦ Highlights ✦



LIVING WITH DOGS

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Swimming As Exercise

Swimming is terrific exercise for dogs. It eliminates the joint stress of weight-bearing activities like running, exercises the whole body, and can be continued into old age. Some breeds—Labrador Retrievers, Poodles, Newfoundlands—were bred for waterwork. The dog paddle is in their DNA. Others need to learn to swim.



Here are three steps to making your dog a hound for water:

1. Start slow. Expose your dog to water gradually and use praise and toys along the way. Begin in the shallow parts where only your dog's paws get wet. Play around there until your dog is confident enough to go into water to his knees, then his belly. This can take a few minutes or a few days. Go at your dog's pace. (Never drop a dog in water. It's a surefire way to make him fear it.)

2. Give him a hand. Once your dog is relaxed and confident in water up to his belly, begin the swimming lessons. Support his midsection and hindquarters, and move him slowly into deeper water. Immediately return him to where he can stand up if he starts to struggle. Eventually, after enough short trials, he'll start paddling. Praise and encourage him. Return to shallow water again and reward him with treats and more praise.

3. Set him free. When your dog is comfortable paddling, let him try it on his own. Encourage him to join you in deeper water with a favorite toy or treat. Clip a lightweight leash on him the first few times in case he gets disoriented and needs help redirecting toward the shore after his swim. (A harness is better than a collar when practicing swimming. It's easier and safer to grab if needed.)

Now you're ready for water sports, indoor and out. And remember: after dips in pools, the ocean, lakes, or ponds, rinse your dog in clean water and offer him fresh water to drink.

continued on page 2

"A dog teaches us fidelity, perseverance, and to turn around three times before lying down."

- Robert Benchley



These Movie Dogs?

Beasley. The big lovable Dogue de Bordeaux behind Hooch in the 1989 movie *Turner and Hooch*. Beasley got rave reviews from his co-star Tom Hanks, who called him an “Oscar-caliber actor.”

Jed. This dog-wolf hybrid played White Fang in the 1991 eponymous movie based on Jack London’s book about the friendship between a Yukon gold hunter and the mixed dog-wolf he rescues from abusers.

Hank. Training for his famous roller-skating scene in 1995’s *The Truth About Cats and Dogs* took three months for this easygoing Great Dane.

Arokat’s Echobar Take Me Dancing. Playing high-maintenance pooch Beatrice in mockumentary *Best in Show* (2000) where five dog owners head for the Mayflower Kennel Club Dog Show probably came natural to this prize-winning Weimaraner.



A WORLD OF DOGS

The Expectations Game

In our ongoing adventure of companionship with dogs nothing trips us up quite as much as our own unrealistic expectations. Dogs who don’t do as they are told? We think them willfully disobedient, stubborn, or, worst of all, slow on the uptake. We overestimate their attention span and level of emotional control. We think they should know instinctively how to navigate big groups of dogs playing together. We expect them to quickly grasp concepts we deem important and logical for dogs, such as going to the bathroom outside (except when it’s OK not to, like at daycare). Unless a good dog trainer sets us straight, we may even expect angelic behavior after completing a single 6-week training class. Our high and often naive expectations cause us grief and worry, so why are they so hard to shake?



Blame culture, for one thing. Books and movies that portray dogs as highly intelligent (in a human sort of way) and capable of complex planning, morally superior to many humans in their loyalty and trustworthiness. And blame us, for another. Try as we might, we have a hard time not anthropomorphizing animals in general and dogs in particular. Often without realizing it, we judge them by our own ability to learn through observation and insight, internalize values, move mentally into the future, and think abstractly—none of which dogs can do.

Two things are important here. One, that we examine our expectations of dogs to give them a realistic chance to be successful at living with us and doing the things we ask them to do. Training based on learning theory (i.e. behaviorism) is the best tool we have to understand and change the behavior of dogs, which means we need to be willing to learn about it and develop the patience and persistence to apply it. Second, that we celebrate the wonderfulness of dogs not as honorary humans but as they are. Great learners with keen olfactory senses, capable of discriminating fine differences in their environment and with a rich emotional life. In other words, marvelous creatures we are lucky to share our lives with.

(continued from page 1)



DOGS IN ACTION

Arson Dogs

For more than 12,000 years, dogs have worked alongside humans. They have herded our livestock, hunted with us, and pulled us across otherwise impassable frozen expanses. Most modern dogs are companions, of course, but those who do work have ever more extraordinary job descriptions. Accelerant-detection is one example. Arson dogs work with fire investigative units to sniff out minuscule amounts of anything from lamp oil to lighter fluid (they can detect more than 60 different ignitable petroleum-based hydrocarbons) in scenes flooded with water or covered in snow or mud. They use their 200 million scent receptors (compared to our 5 million) to help investigators accurately assess the flammable products present at a fire scene and increase the chances of collecting a positive sample.



This can help rule arson in—or out. With billions of dollars in property and hundreds of lives lost every year as a result of intentionally set fires, arson dogs can play an important role in bringing arsonists to justice.

What makes a good arson dog? At the top of the list is a high level of energy. Dogs that might be considered the problem child in other settings are often prime candidates—Guide dog training “dropouts,” for example. Other key characteristics are curiosity, high trainability, an excellent nose, and an easygoing demeanor.



HEALTHY DOG

Essential Fatty Acids For Dogs

Good fats and oils are vital to a healthy balanced diet for your dog. Not enough good fats is as big a problem as too much. Aim for a fat percentage of 12 to 16 percent—even for dogs that need to lose weight (unless otherwise advised by your vet). Why? Good fats, known as essential fatty acids, are necessary for normal development and function of body cells, nerves, muscles, and tissues. They help the body absorb fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E, and K. Too low fat levels, by contrast, can result in dry skin, dull coat, an impaired immune system, even heart disease.

Check out the ingredient list of your dog’s food for good sources of essential fats. For example fish, chicken or beef fat, flaxseed oil, canola oil, etc. For thorough information about all dog food and nutrition, check out *The Whole Dog Journal* (whole-dog-journal.com).

DOG IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The English Cocker Spaniel

This dapper little gun dog was originally bred for flushing and retrieving small game. Don’t be fooled by her melting spaniel eyes and soft, feathery coat: the Cocker is an all-terrain dog and can be a handful to live with. Exuberant, strong-willed, and energetic, she needs lots of exercise and careful training. Cockers love having a job—something scent-related, preferably, otherwise anything demanding will do: agility, obedience, flyball, canine disc, etc. The well-socialized Cocker wants to be part of all family activities. Beware the noise, though, she’s quick to alert to doorbells. (A Cocker Spaniel holds the world record for the most persistent barking: 907 times in ten minutes.) With her soulful expression, the Cocker is popular in arts and entertainment, most famously in Disney’s enduring 1955 animated classic, *Lady and the Tramp*.

To give an English Cocker Spaniel a home, search online for nearby rescues.



OUR SERVICES

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4 Ways To Keep Your Senior Dog Healthy

Regular vet check-ins. This is the gospel throughout your dog's life, but extra important in those golden years. Twice-annual exams is a good rule of thumb; more for dogs with known health issues. Between visits, look out for changes in your dog's appetite, irritability level, or trouble hearing or seeing.

Injury prevention. Provide ramps and stairs to give your dog easy access to furniture and beds. Consider carpeting slippery floors to give old paws solid footing.

Age-appropriate diet. Dietary needs change with age. Some dogs gain weight; others can't hold on to theirs. Consult your vet about adjusting your dog's diet for optimal health.

Sleep therapy. Consider investing in an orthopedic dog bed especially for seniors. Memory foam helps cushion aging joints—some beds even have heat and vibration functions.

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